

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DUBAN 00106 161403Z
ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-08 DOE-11 SOE-02 /032 W
-----042780 170347Z /73

R 161313Z FEB 78
FM AMCONSUL DURBAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2834
USDOC WASHDC
AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG
INFO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

UNCLAS DURBAN 0106

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

EO 11652: NA
TAGS: EIND, BENC, BEXP, BTION, SF
SUBJ: MAJOR PROJECT: NEW CHEMICAL PLANT PROPOSED FOR
RICHARDS BAY

1. MANAGING DIRECTOR OF THE SENTRACHEM CHEMICALS COMPANY
CONFIRMED TO THE PRESS THAT HIS FIRM HAS DECIDED ON RICHARDS
BAY AS THE SITE FOR A NEW CHEMICALS FACTORY TO BE CONSTRUCTED
AS PART OF THEIR TEN YEAR PLANNING PROGRAM. MD SAID FINAL
DECISIONS ON SIZE OF FACTORY AND RANGE OF PRODUCTS TO BE
MANUFACTURED SHOULD BE MADE WITHIN SIX MONTHS. HE DID NOT
INDICATE WHEN CONSTRUCTION WILL COMMENCE OR SOURCE OF PETROLEUM
TO PRODUCE CHEMICALS. (SENRACHEM IS A JOHANNESBURG-BASED
PRIVATE SOUTH AFRICAN OWNED CHEMICAL COMPANY WHICH IS THE
SECOND LARGEST DOMESTIC FIRM IN ITS FIELD WITH AN ANNUAL GROSS
EARNINGS OF R165 MILLION (\$190 MILLION)).

2. CHOICE OF RICHARDS BAY AS THE SITE FOR THE PLANT IS
CONSISTENT WITH PLANS SAG ANNOUNCED IN EARLY 1970S FOR THE
DEVELOPMENT OF THE BAY IN PART AS A PETROCHEMICAL COMPLEX
WHERE SUPERTANKERS OF UP TO 150,000 TONS COULD DELIVER PETROLEUM
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INTO A MODERN REFINERY LINKED TO SOUTH AFRICA'S INDUSTRIAL
HEARTLAND BY A MODERN RAIL LINE. THE REFINERY AND PETRO-
CHEMICAL PORTION OF THE PLANS WERE SHELVED AFTER THE 1973
ARAB OIL BOYCOTT AND PETROLEUM PRICE INCREASE. THIS SCHEME
MAY BE THE FIRST INDICATION THE SAG IS RECONSIDERING THE
ESTABLISHMENT OF A PETROCHEMICAL COMPLEX AT THE BAY. ONE
RATIONALE ADVANCED IN THE PRESS FOR THE DECISION TO PROCEED

WITH THE PLAN IS TO REDUCE THE COUNTRY'S FUTURE DEPENDENCE
ON IMPORTED CHEMICALS WHICH COULD BE SUBJECT TO FOREIGN
RESTRICTIONS.

3. WE WILL DEVELOP WHATEVER FURTHER INFORMATION WE CAN ON
THE PROJECT HERE. HOWEVER, SINCE SENTRACHEM'S HEADQUARTERS
IS IN JOHANNESBURG, SUGGEST ANY INQUIRIES ALSO BE SENT TO THE
CONGEN THERE.
FARBER

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